

Thumbs up! PUMBA

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The first batch of MBA biotechnology has graduated from Pune University. Most of the students have received job offers, some have joined, some are waiting while some are planning to take up PhD.

It is celebration time at major management institutes. The scenario is no different at the Department of Management Sciences (PUMBA), University of Pune where the first batch of students just completed the management course in biotechnology. The final exams ended on April 30 and the students are still awaiting their results. But lady luck has already opened doors with offers from different life sciences/biotechnology/biopharmaceutical companies. Already about 50 percent of the students have got offers and some have even joined jobs.

Companies from across the country with a focus on pharma, services, bioinformatics, suppliers or agriculture segment have been participating in the placement program at PUMBA to take students. Companies like Wockhardt, pioneer in manufacturing recombinant biotech drugs, Serum Institute of India, a leading vaccine manufacturer, Frost & Sullivan, a global biotech consultant, RPG Life Sciences, Sanmar, Advanced Biochemicals, Trans Search, a flagship company of Sanmar group, Hysel, Quintiles Spectra and Synergy Net have participated in campus interviews.

Most of the companies have made offers in the range of Rs 2.5- 3.5 lakh gross per annum. RPG Life Sciences has made the highest offer of Rs 3.8 lakh. Wockhardt has made as many as eight offers while Serum, RPG Life Sciences made two offers each. However, Smita S Singhania, course co-ordinator (MBA-biotechnology) observed that we were not able to make it to all

the top biotechnology companies like Biocon. This is mainly because the companies recruit students during the last quarter of the year, which the students find difficult to wait for. Commenting on package deals Singhania said, "We are looking at the gross a candidate can get and not the cost to the company (CTC). Usually the company package to a candidate includes air fair, hotel accommodation, laptop and other expenses. So the package will be on a higher side. We have asked the companies to provide the gross figure the students will get at the end."

About 10 percent of the students were interested in becoming entrepreneurs at the start of the course. But now looking at the companies and their package deals they have changed their mind. However a couple of students are interested in pursuing higher education.

The placement process started about two months ago. It is expected to continue till the end of June. The enthusiasm shown by the companies reflects the industry's need for fresh talent in the marketing space for biotechnology.

Reaction to the program

KA Narayan, president corporate, human resources and legal, Wockhardt Ltd that has made as many as eight offers and looking at a few more said, "Its great to know the University of Pune is offering courses in biotechnology from department of management sciences. Actually the basic understanding of biotechnology will support the marketing activities of a company like Wockhardt, which has biotech products. It's difficult for the regular medical representatives to convince the doctors to use the new therapeutic drugs. Biotech drugs are not the generic products. To market the biotechnology products it is essential to have some knowledge about the product."

Commenting on a career in marketing with specialization in biotechnology, Narayan said, "Biotechnology is still not a common phenomenon in India. The future is bright as many companies are looking at biotechnology as new opportunity. We are looking at recruiting 5-10 students from department of management sciences (biotechnology) every year . This year we have recruited about eight students."

"When we look at students from high profile management institutes like IIMs, they prefer to opt for FMCG, MNCs, software and other general companies. They do not look at the pharmaceutical market. And then they do not stick to the job for a long time," observed Narayan.

The MBA-biotechnology program initiated by the University of Pune has a student intake of 60 each year with basic qualifications in life sciences, natural sciences, veterinary science, ayurveda, allopathic medicine, engineering, etc. The favorable industry response will encourage the university to move ahead and churn out quality student force. But at the same time the university has to look into the student's aspirations for further specialization and studies. This will go a long way in strengthening the industry-academia relationship and help catalyze and direct the biotech revolution.

Narayan Kulkarni